A photograph of a person in a blue shirt and shorts jumping over a large, flat rock in a desert landscape. The background shows a clear blue sky and distant mountains.

Geotourism: *Tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place – its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of its residents.*

Arizona Origins - What's it all about!

Arizona Origins is a new initiative launched by the Arizona Office of Tourism. As the name suggests, the program focuses on the State's unique cultural, environmental, historical and heritage assets, bringing a more holistic approach to celebrating these uniquely Arizona attributes. Much of the stimulus for this new initiative comes from work undertaken by National Geographic and its Center for Sustainable Destinations, particularly embracing and applying the principals of Geotourism. While **Arizona Origins** incorporates a new marketing campaign, it is more than just a slogan or icon. As these educational materials will present, it incorporates new thinking in terms of co-branding with National Geographic on a Geotourism MapGuide, it provides new opportunities to link and integrate with products and destinations both within southern Arizona and with our neighbor to the south in Sonora, Mexico. Importantly, it also provides new ways to reinforce targeted branding efforts for our state and brings new ways to think about product development and associated sustainability practices. Although the initial application focuses on the mid- to-southern portions of the state, **Arizona Origins** will ultimately be applied across the state.

National Geographic and Geotourism

The term "Geotourism" is increasingly being used both inside the tourism industry and by savvy travelers. The term was coined by Jonathan Tourtellot, senior editor for National Geographic Traveler Magazine and director of its Center for Sustainable Destinations. Geotourism is defined as tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place – its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of its residents. Geotourism incorporates the concept of sustainable tourism—that destinations should remain unspoiled for future generations—while allowing for enhancement that protects the character of the locale. Geotourism also adopts a principle from its cousin, ecotourism—that tourism revenue can promote conservation—and extends that principle beyond nature travel to encompass culture and history, as well as all distinctive assets of a place.

Geotourism Principals

Geotourism incorporates a broad range of principals including:

1. Geotourism is synergistic: All the elements of geographical character together create a tourist experience that is richer than the sum of its parts, appealing to visitors with diverse interests.
2. It informs both visitors and hosts. Residents discover their own heritage and how the ordinary and familiar may be of interest to outsiders. As local people develop pride and skill in showing off their locale, tourists get more out of their visit.
3. It benefits residents economically. Travel businesses do their best to use the local workforce, services, and products and supplies. When the community understands the beneficial role of geotourism, it becomes an incentive for wise destination stewardship.
4. It supports integrity of place. Destination-savvy travelers seek out businesses that emphasize the character of the locale. Tourism revenues in turn raise local perceived value of those assets.
5. It means great trips. Enthusiastic visitors bring new knowledge home, telling stories that send friends and relatives off to experience the same thing—a continuing business for the destination.

A More Holistic Approach

For too long, destinations have thought about their visitors in ways that are too defined and constrained. They were eco-tourists, cultural visitors, or travelers intrigued by a destination's heritage. Geotourism thinks of these assets and the visitors they attract in a more holistic way, recognizing that the visitor who is intrigued by a unique natural environment often desires a deeper understanding of the heritage and culture of the destination. Linking and integrating these geotourism elements makes for a richer, more vibrant experience.

Geotourism is sustainable tourism energized. It sustains, but also enhances the character of a region. This enhancement can be done through restorative tourism, meaning tourism that helps to save something that might otherwise disappear, or through constructive tourism, creating something suited to the local that makes it a little better than it was before.

Arizona has a rich diversity of these destination elements – we can maximize their potential by linking, enhancing or developing these special destinations, using geotourism principals as an overriding theme. Think about Arizona's diversity and future opportunities in these key geotourism categories!

- Flora and Fauna
- History
- Archeology
- Geology
- Traditional Architecture
- Local Music
- Cuisine
- Local Crafts
- Dances
- Arts

Geotourism's Integrated Thinking



Source: National Geographic – Center for Sustainable Destinations



Arizona is Geotourism Dependent

Many of Arizona's warm weather competitors possess a broad inventory of powerful man-made attractions. These are important "destination driver" products for their states, as a large themed attraction like Disneyland in California and the Magic Kingdom in Florida attracted 14.5 and 16.1 million visitors respectively in 2005. Even more moderate sized facilities, like Sea World and Knott's Berry Farm, drew impressive levels of visitors at 4.1 and 3.5 million guests respectively in the same year.

Although Arizona has great man-made resorts, golf and spa facilities, the state is heavily reliant on its geotourism related assets to attract visitors to our state. Just consider Arizona's top ten natural attractions noted below. The Grand Canyon National Park tops the list at 4.4 million visitors, followed by Saguaro National Park at 3.6 million. While clearly powerful attractions, they still attract only about 1/3rd the volumes of a major theme park. This is not to say we should be striving to achieve theme park volumes in our National Parks, but rather to more fully appreciate the power and importance of these natural attractions to our state's visitor market. Looking more closely to the southern regions of the state, Coronado National Forest and the Sabino Canyon Recreational Area attract almost 600,000 visitors annually and although not in the top ten parks, Organ Pipe National Monument attracts just over 300,000 visitors annually.

Top 10 Natural Attractions

	Attraction	2005 Attendance			
1	Grand Canyon National Park	4,470,232	6	Canyon de Chelly	900,000
2	Saguaro National Park	3,629,550	7	Montezuma Castle NM	662,912
3	South Mountain Park	2,500,000	8	Petrified Forest National Park	598,498
4	Glen Canyon NRA	1,928,274	9	Coronado NF & Sabino Canyon RA	594,278
5	Lake Mead NRA	1,426,915	10	Lake Pleasant Regional Park	500,754

These natural attraction attendance levels become even more meaningful when contrasted to Arizona's top private paid attractions. Unlike the theme parks noted above, Arizona's most visited man-made attraction is the Phoenix Zoo, a facility that derives much of its visitor base from local residents. As can be seen, most of these top attractions possess attendance levels below 500,000 annually and importantly, many of them possess a geotourism orientation.

Top 10 Private Paid Attendance Attractions*

	Attraction	2005 Attendance			
1	The Phoenix Zoo	1,250,000	6	Wildlife World Zoo	395,000
2	Rawhide Western Town	600,000	7	Desert Botanical Gardens	317,929
3	Arizona -Sonora Desert Museum	453,000	8	Grand Canyon Railway	222,277
4	Reid Park Zoo	445,117	9	Heard Museum	200,000
5	Arizona Science Center	400,000	10	Phoenix Art Museum	170,853

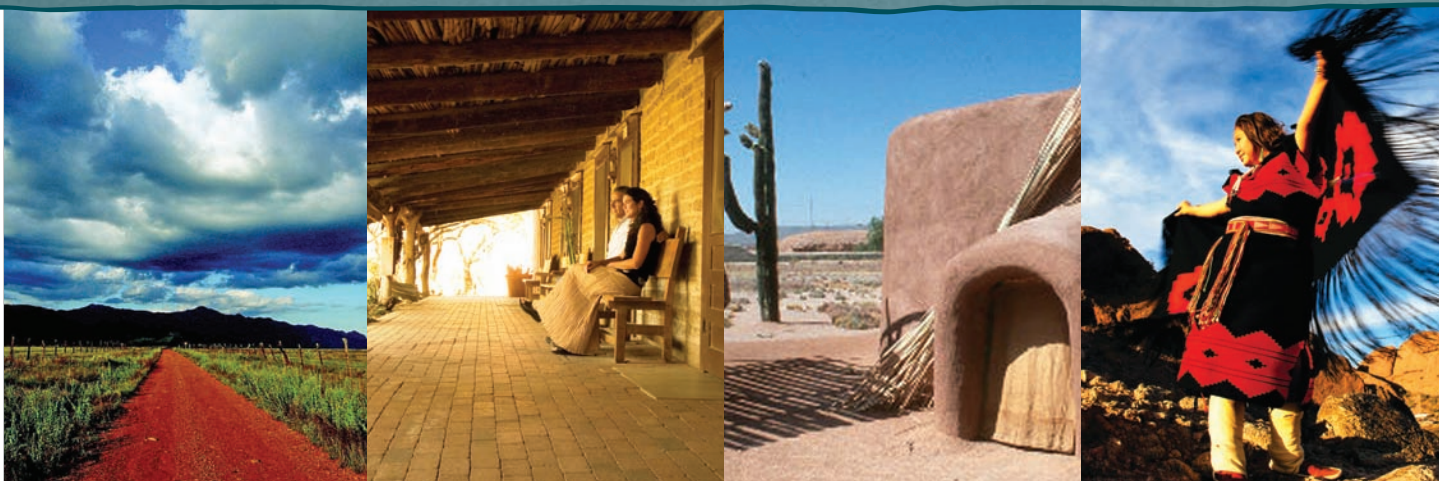
*excludes event venues

While these noted attractions are the most powerful in terms of attendance levels, there are hundreds of additional examples of geotourism products around Arizona that are important to the state's offerings and have the potential to be even more powerful in the future.

Geotourism Tourism Product Challenges

It's clear that Arizona is a geotourism dependent state and that it possess a wide range of product offerings. However, there are a variety of key challenges associated with many of these geotourism related attractions; five of the most critical are noted below.

1. Attractions can act somewhat independent of other visitor offerings.
Often they are not well integrated with other regional attractions and operate relatively independently even though their themes and stories could be part of a more powerful integrated offering.
2. These facilities frequently have missions that go beyond the visitor marketplace.
Many of these geotourism related attractions have missions that go beyond the visitor, such as land management or collections management.
3. They often lack marketing resources. As a large percentage of these attractions can be of a public or non-profit nature, operating dollars are often limited, particularly those dedicated to marketing purposes.
4. Many attractions have limited sources of new capital, thus limiting reinvestment and enhancement efforts.
Similar to the previous point, capital available for reinvestment and enhancement purposes are often constrained, thus exhibits and the power of the attraction can not be revised to speak to today's more demanding visitor.
5. An overriding goal for many is long term sustainability for their facility and the associated implications to carrying capacity decisions. The goal of attracting and presenting their attraction to the visiting public has to be balanced to ensure the attraction itself is not denigrated.



Arizona Origins and its Geotourism Focus Reinforces Statewide Branding Goals

The Arizona Office of Tourism undertook a major brand development initiative in 2005 and launched these findings last year. The state recognized it was critical that an overall brand architecture be developed that differentiated Arizona from other key competitors and allowed for regions around the state to build and expand on this underlying brand. An essential brand promise laid at the foundation of this effort – “Inspiring Unforgettable Southwest Moments.”

Arizona Origins and its associated geotourism principals are an important “next step” in applying this brand promise. At the heart of the geotourism definition - tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place – its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of its residents – are the many unique, inspiring experiences that help make an Arizona visitor’s experience special and differentiated. A major component of **Arizona Origins** is the teaming with National Geographic and their Center for Sustainable Destinations in the development of the Arizona – Sonora Desert Region Geotourism MapGuide. This new tool brings a heightened level of recognition to many of these truly special geotourism experiences and associates one of the most powerful names in world-wide travel experiences, National Geographic.

Four key brand dimensions expand on this brand promise and embody what differentiates the state from other destinations. **Arizona Origins** has applications across all four of these dimensions.

1. Unexpectedly Exhilarating Signature Scenery - the beautiful scenery and vistas that set Arizona apart.

Strands of organ pipe cactus in Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument or the unique birding and riparian environment of the Patagonia-Sonoita Creek Preserve are highlighted on the MapGuide, bringing both increased recognition, as well as integration with a host of other regional experiences that can heighten a visitor’s experience.

2. Rejuvenating Open-Air Lifestyle – the state’s ability to present a blend of relaxed sophistication and recharge-your-batteries positive energy.

The initiative helps to present uniquely Arizona experiences, whether viewing southwest art at the 10 acre retreat DeGrazia Galley in the Sun, dining on fiery chile sauces at Los Dos Molinos, or relaxing at the special Hacienda Corona de Guevavi bed and breakfast.

3. Timeless Discoveries - the state’s rich range of authentic, unspoiled territory.

From the Hohokam heritage presented at the Pueblo Grande Museum and Archeological Park, to the role of Fort Huachucha in the settling of Arizona, **Arizona Origins** focuses not on manufactured, artificial attractions, but on genuine experiences that bring the real Arizona to life.

4. Vibrant Variety – a state with dramatic range, sweeping variety and inspiring abundance.

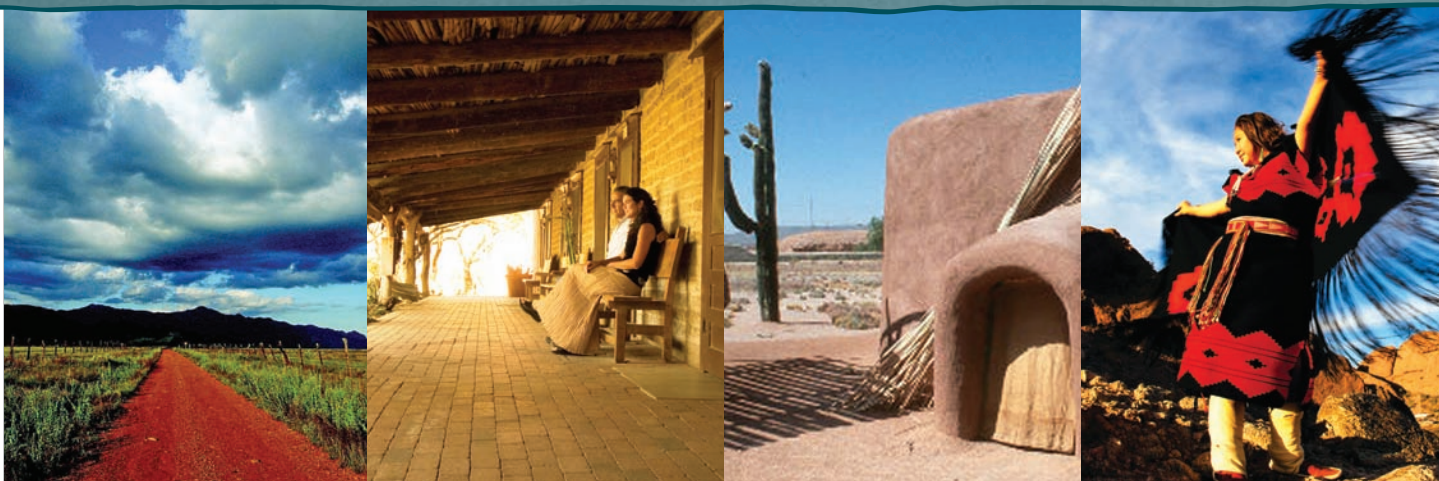
At the heart of **Arizona Origins** and its geotourism principals is the concept of “serving up” our destination in a holistic fashion. Making it easy for a visitor to understand the broad diversity, but also working to integrate and tie these diverse experiences in meaningful ways.

Applying Arizona’s Brand Promise

“Inspiring
Unforgettable
Southwest Moments”



“Arizona Origins and
Arizona-Sonora
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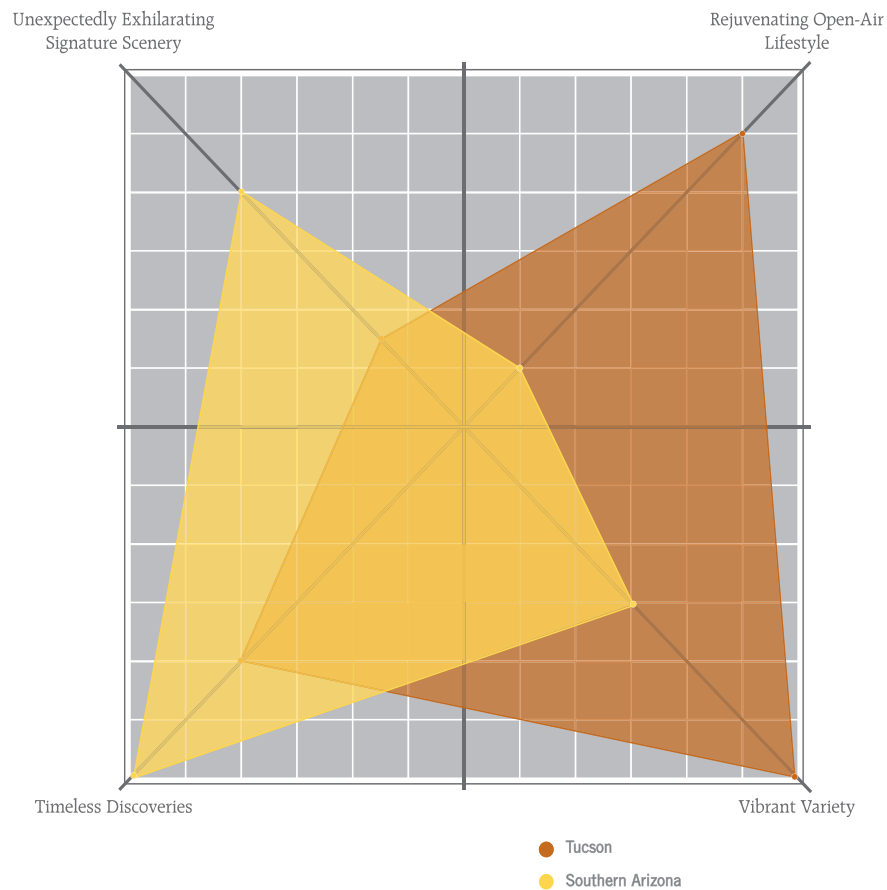
Tucson and Southern Arizona Perceptual Mapping

A critical analysis tool that helped regions of the state better understand their positioning relative to these key brand dimensions was the development of a series of “Perceptual Maps.” These maps depicted current perceptions of visitors, showing both strengths and weaknesses relative to the four key brand dimensions. Although the MapGuide includes the Phoenix area, it links with the state of Sonora’s focused attention on the southern portions of the state of Arizona.

As shown below, the Tucson regions’ broad diversity of experiences is shown in its strong “Vibrant Variety” ratings. Additionally, the recognition of its unique combination of relaxed sophistication and recharge –your –batteries positive energy is reflected in its strong “Rejuvenating Open-Air Lifestyle” ratings.

By comparison, Southern Arizona shows its greatest strengths in the many “Timeless Discoveries” visitors associate with the region. The regions’ “Unexpectedly Exhilarating Signature Scenery” is also very positively associated with this region of the state.

When considered together, what is clear is this southern region of the state possesses strengths in all four dimensions, a truly powerful combination! The challenge, however, is how does the collective region present this diversity of attractions and experiences, linking and integrating them for the fullest potential.



Arizona Origins and the Arizona –Sonora Desert Region Geotourism MapGuide is an important step in this integration. The holistic thinking helps to integrate all four brand dimensions and presents the region in a unified manner. The co-branded relationship with National Geographic and the Geotourism MapGuide also helps in reinforcing the quality and authenticity of these offerings.